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January 24, 2023

Greetings Kestrel Heights Community Members,

As part of our ongoing parent and family engagement efforts, our administrative team would like to take a moment to share with you information about our school's letter grade. Under state law, every school in North Carolina is assigned a single letter grade: A, B, C, D, or F, based on third through eighth-grade scholars' performance on End of Grade (EOG) Assessments. Letter grades are calculated according to a two-part formula: 80% based on scholars' proficiency scores on end-of-grade standardized tests and 20% based on scholars' growth performance over a school year. This formula puts excessive weight on a single test score and less value on a scholar's educational progress or "growth" made throughout the year.

During the 2021-2022 school year, Kestrel Heights was rated a D and designated as low performing, along with over 800 other schools in the state. At first glance, the school's letter grade is disappointing; however, the simplicity of a single-letter grade is misleading. This single letter does not accurately reflect the monumental efforts of our school community over the last several years, including during the pandemic. For the 2021-2022 school year, scholar EOG proficiency declined (which accounts for 80% of the letter grade), but scholar academic growth (20 % of the letter grade) improved.

We have all heard about the negative impact the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures, and virtual instruction have had on student academic performance. The state letter grade, which relies heavily on EOG proficiency scores, does not account for the incredible demands on our students and teachers over the last several years. We are proud of the significant academic growth displayed by our students in the face of such adversity; in our view, meeting or exceeding expected academic growth is a much more accurate picture of the excellent teaching and learning that have taken place in our school over the last year.

In fact, North Carolina recognized Kestrel Heights with an Academic Growth Award for meeting its expected growth goals in 2021-2022 (see certificate below). Winning an award for academic growth but being designated "low performing" based on test scores seems like a contradiction, and that is because of the way the state's formula for report card grades is calculated. Meeting

our growth goals demonstrates that we are effectively living our mission of strengthening academic skills; it also indicates that we are doing the powerful work of meeting each individual scholar at their level and helping them achieve their academic goals. We are proud of our staff and students for this significant achievement.

Kestrel Heights has created a culture that values data, and the school performance data shows that we are moving in the right direction regarding student growth. While the school anticipated lower performance grades as we continue to reverse academic gaps created by the pandemic, we are still working to develop and implement programs that will address goals related to improving EOG scores.

In 2022-2023, the comprehensive plan will address the following areas of continued growth:

- Positive Behavior Interventions and Support
- Standards-aligned instruction
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Implementation of a tiered instructional system
- Data-driven decision making
- Student support and intervention services
- Blended Learning and Small Group Instruction
- Family and community engagement

We are excited about this school year and are working to make it a success for your scholar. Already, we have provided rigorous professional development to our staff in best teaching practices and have begun implementing small-group instruction. In addition, the return of in-person learning has bolstered our efforts to increase scholar achievement, and we are building strong relationships with scholars and their families.

If you have questions about the content of this letter, do not hesitate to contact your building director for more information.

Sincerely,

Tonya Jackson
Andrew Touchette
Samantha Villegas



North Carolina
Academic Growth Award

IS PROUDLY PRESENTED TO

Kestrel Heights School

Charter School

for achieving the goal of expected academic progress
for students during the 2021-22 school year.



Superintendent, Department of Public Instruction



Chairman, State Board of Education